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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 000678

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S/WCI FOR WILLIAMSON AND LAVINE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PO](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: FM AMADO AND AMBASSADOR DISCUSS LAJES AIR BASE,
KOSOVO, AFGHANISTAN, AND GTMO

REF: A. LISBON 510
[1](#)B. LISBON 467
[1](#)C. LISBON 410
[1](#)D. LISBON 251
[1](#)E. LISBON 183
[1](#)F. 07 LISBON 2720

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas Stephenson for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

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Summary

[1](#)1. (S) The Ambassador told FM Amado on March 19 that Lajes Air Base is important but not crucial to the United States, so it made sense to think about possible new missions that would make the base more attractive. They agreed to move forward with military-to-military exploration of a new training airspace north of the Azores. Amado insisted there is broad agreement among the mainstream political parties that NATO's effort in Afghanistan is important to Portugal's own security, but he lamented that the government's resource constraints do not enable it to engage as actively as it would like. Amado shed no light on when his government would recognize Kosovo, saying only that the decision would come "soon." The Foreign Minister said he wants to revisit the standing U.S. request to accept detainees from Guantanamo but plans to do so by pushing for a common EU approach to the issue. The portion of the conversation addressing talks between Portugal's largest energy company, Galp, and Iran's national oil company will be reported septel. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador called on FM Luis Amado on March 19, accompanied by Pol/Econ counselor. Amado was joined by diplomatic advisor Paulo Lourenco.

Lajes Air Base -- New Missions?

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador recalled his earlier discussion with Amado (ref C) in which the two had discussed the possible establishment of a training airspace north of Lajes Air Base in the Azores. As Amado suggested, the Ambassador later raised the issue formally in the Bilateral Commission on February 21 (ref A), when he expressed his hope that our respective Air Forces would be able to begin discussions this spring. Minister of Defense Severiano Teixeira, however, subsequently told the Ambassador that he would be unable to authorize his military officers to do so without written authorization from Amado, while Air Force Chief General Araujo had indicated he would be unable to proceed without a formal go-ahead from Severiano Teixeira. The Ambassador solicited Amado's guidance on how to move forward in addressing an issue that seemed to hold real benefits for both sides. He added that there is increasing pressure on

our side for additional personnel reductions at Lajes. The air base is important to the U.S. but not critical, he emphasized, so it would be useful to think together about possible new missions for Lajes.

¶4. (C) Amado replied that he planned to see his defense counterpart later in the day and would convey his verbal approval of military-to-military discussions on a potential training area. In addition, Amado would send to the MOD the same day a written note containing the same message. That ought to give Severiano Teixeira what he needs to instruct General Araujo to proceed, Amado commented. The Foreign Minister added that the GOP must consult closely with the autonomous Regional Government of the Azores (RGA) as discussions proceed, and he reported that RGA President Cesar told him the U.S. Consul in the Azores had briefed him on the possible training area. Regarding the broader issue of finding new missions for Lajes, if the RGA accepts the need to do so, we can proceed along those lines, Amado stated.

Afghanistan

¶5. (C) The Ambassador thanked Amado for Portugal's decision to deploy a second Operational and Mentoring Liaison Team (OMLT) to ISAF and expressed his hope that the decision would be made public before the Bucharest Summit. It is essential that NATO succeed in Afghanistan, he said, and that all Allies engage actively there. The Ambassador urged Portugal to reconsider its decision to withdraw its commando company in August of this year.

¶6. (C) Amado asserted that there is broad consensus among

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the mainstream political parties in Portugal that the fight in Afghanistan is critical to Portugal's own national security interests, even if there are differences internally and with us about how to achieve our common objectives there.

He lamented, however, that the government's limited resources prevent it from being as engaged as it would like to be. Amado recalled the most recent gathering of EU foreign ministers, at which there had been some pessimistic assessments of recent developments in Afghanistan but no voices of dissension regarding the importance of the mission there.

Kosovo

¶7. (C) The Ambassador asked when Portugal planned to recognize Kosovo, emphasizing that the longer the uncertainty lingers, the greater the risk of destabilizing activities. On the other hand, the sooner Serbia and Russia recognize Kosovo's inevitability as an independent state, the sooner Belgrade and Pristina can move toward integration with the Euro-Atlantic community.

¶8. (C) He alone does not make the decision on Kosovo, Amado replied, adding that the GOP is "consulting with our President and our allies." He lamented that the UN Security Council appears blocked and would say only that Portugal would take a decision "soon."

Guantanamo

¶9. (S) Amado raised Guantanamo, saying he wanted to follow up on the visit to Lisbon in October 2007 by Ambassador Williamson (Ref F -- in which the latter asked Portugal to accept a number of GTMO detainees). Toward that end, he expressed his intention to raise formally with his EU counterparts the need to develop a new framework for transatlantic collaboration, one that moves beyond the "exceptional" period that followed the 9/11 attacks. Europe

and the United States need to pass from "a stage of exceptionality to one of maturity," Amado said. As part of that effort, it is important to adjust our legal systems on both sides of the Atlantic to take into account the new threats that we all face. A discussion of what to do about Guantanamo, and how Europe can help, would be raised in the context of this broader discussion within the EU, according to Amado.

Comment

¶10. (C) As usual, Amado was very generous with his time -- today's conversation lasted an hour and ten minutes. We were disappointed that he did not provide more clarity on the GOP's position on Kosovo recognition, despite our pressing. We were struck by his reference to ongoing consultations with the President, which makes us wonder whether Cavaco Silva might be the stumbling block. It is the first time we have heard such a reference -- our contacts at all levels have been unusually close-mouthed on the issue -- but we will follow up with the President's office. Prime Minister Socrates and his government make the final decision on recognition, but the President wields significant influence in his role as commander in chief, and Socrates has been very solicitous of his foreign policy expertise and interests. On the positive side, Amado clearly wanted to send a message of his desire to be helpful on Guantanamo. His diplomatic advisor clarified after the meeting that Portugal is prepared to accept some detainees but only subsequent to an EU consensus requiring member states to play their part in helping us close the facility. Amado plans to lead the effort to achieve such a consensus but will do so indirectly by pressing for strengthened transatlantic collaboration. Stephenson